

between physician and patient is the proper foundational focus of medical ethics. Issues concerning the kinds of need that should be met by the health service, or the rationing of medical resources, seem to be problems of justice which cannot adequately be addressed by appeal merely to an ethos of care.

MATTHEW CLAYTON
Department of Government
Brunel University

Genes and Morality: New Essays

Edited by Veikko Launis, Juhani Pietarinen and Juha Raikka, Amsterdam, Atlanta, Rodopi, 1999, 199 pages, US\$36.

As developments in contemporary genetics continue, so books on the ethics of genetic research and its applications appear with increasing frequency. The problem is that while genetic research itself daily produces the most interesting new developments, once the ethics of genetics has been reasonably delineated, as it has by now, there is increasingly little new to say. This means that many "new" books on the subject are in fact really only re-statements of what has already been said. This is precisely where *Genes and Morality* stands. That is not to say that it is not a good book. It is authoritative, easy to read, and pleasantly jargon-free, but it covers the familiar ground of genetic screening, privacy of genetic information, genetic health and disease, patenting, the human genome project, and so on. This is a disparate collection of essays, and the fact that it is a compilation of papers presented at a meeting means that it suffers from a lack of coherence. One always wishes one had had the opportunity to hear the discussion that took place after presentation of the papers.

The book is also rather odd in that the first part, some 50 pages, is devoted to four authors criticising the arguments and ideas put forward by John Harris in his book, *Wonderwoman and Superman*. John Harris has been a pioneer in the field of the theoretical aspects of genetic bioethics. His liberal conclusions are not accepted by all, but he is so well regarded that this critique is judged to be justified. Nevertheless, these fifty pages do assume prior knowledge of Harris's books in order to make sense of what

is being argued. On the other hand, these chapters do introduce the methodological concepts and theoretical issues central to genetics. Once again, however, the themes are familiar: when does a human become a human being, abortion, and consequentialist and utilitarian principles. Towards the end of the book there is a unique contribution by Christoph Rehmann-Sutter: an intriguing exploration of Mary Shelley's story of Dr Frankenstein, and what various film and stage producers have subsequently made of it, and an analysis of its relevance to modern biotechnology. The book is worth getting just for this.

MARY SELLER
Professor of Developmental Genetics,
Division of Medical and Molecular Genetics
GKT, Guy's Hospital, London SE1 9RT

Abortion in the Developing World

Edited by Axel I Mundigo and Cynthia Indriso, London and New York, Zed Books, 1999, 498 pages, UK £49.95, US \$69.95.

Induced abortion is one of the oldest methods used to end a pregnancy and has been practised in almost all societies. It is clear to social scientists that pregnancy as a social condition is different from pregnancy as a physical condition, but this is not always taken into account by other disciplines. Reasons for abortion are multifaceted and complex, and to understand these it is important to look at more than just the biological aspects of terminating a pregnancy.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO) reports, 40 to 60 million abortions currently take place in the world every year. Despite large costs and efforts to prevent these, policies to introduce safer alternatives have been ineffective. There are indications that the number of induced abortions is actually increasing, particularly in the developing world. The majority of operations are performed illegally, often leading to complications and deaths of women. The costs in terms of human suffering are incalculable.

Abortion in the Developing World was funded by the WHO to discover why, in spite of the serious risks involved, women still resort to abortion even in those countries where adequate family planning services provide contraceptive facilities. The book also aims to

understand how abortion and contraception behaviour are related. It provides a cross-cultural forum for women to explain the motivations behind their decisions. As the editors put it: "abortion issues have been the subject of intensive debate among men: legal scholars, moralists, men of religion and politicians. The voices of women have been drowned in this loud debate despite the fact that it is women whose bodies, psyche, health and life are directly concerned". Gaining knowledge of women's views and needs is of course paramount, however these should be understood in their fuller social and cultural context, ie the degree of involvement of men and the wider kin network in decision making should be taken into consideration. Only three of the case studies include men, and it is interesting to see that in these, women either echoed men's decisions or had consulted closely with them.

Several important common issues emerge from the studies: legalising abortions has reduced the health risks, but has not reduced their total number; the relationship between abortion and contraception continues to be poorly understood; abortion is not only the resort of unmarried women, the poor, and young adolescents girls, a considerable number of married women also use it as a means of regulating fertility. The specific problems of increasing adolescent pregnancy are given a chapter of their own. Most importantly, it emerges that the decision about how to handle an unwanted pregnancy is not taken lightly by women and there is an "agonising moral and ethical dilemma that women face in deciding how to handle an unwanted pregnancy". The service providers, especially those working illegally, also describe the major moral and ethical dilemma they face when confronted by the abject misery and the bleak future awaiting women who seek abortion if they do not receive help. The book explores these dilemmas, and questions whether abortion should be viewed/treated as a health matter, or as one of ideology (moral, religious, etc).

Abortion in the Developing World is commendable in its in-depth, cross-cultural treatment of the subject (it takes case studies from 16 different countries) and its strong policy recommendations. However, coverage of the conservative Muslim Middle East and North Africa is needed to complement the abundant studies from conservative Catholic countries. Various funda-